Statement on Biological Weapons
UN General Assembly First Committee
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Distinguished representatives,

The prohibition against biological weapons remains one of the clearest norms in international security. No state openly defends the deliberate use of disease as a weapon.

But a strong prohibition is not enough if the institutions intended to uphold it fail to keep pace with the world around them.

The Biological Weapons Convention is approaching an important moment. After almost four years of work, the Working Group on strengthening the Convention has just one substantive session remaining, in December, before reporting to the Tenth Review Conference in 2027.

Considerable progress has been made. But some of the most consequential questions remain unresolved, including compliance and verification, confidence-building, and the design of new mechanisms for science and technology and international cooperation.

States parties should use this final session to deliver concrete institutional progress.

This is particularly urgent because the biological risk landscape is changing rapidly.

Artificial intelligence is converging with synthetic biology and laboratory automation. These technologies can accelerate biological design, reduce some barriers to sophisticated experimentation and make biological capabilities more widely accessible. But they can also generate new forms of data, support screening and strengthen transparency and compliance monitoring.

The challenge is therefore not simply to control new technologies. It is to ensure that the BWC can understand and govern their implications.

That requires an independent, expert-led and adequately resourced science and technology mechanism able to connect scientific assessment with timely policy action.

It also requires sustained work on compliance and verification. New technologies, including AI and data analytics, may provide valuable tools. But technology cannot substitute for internationally agreed procedures, access and accountability.

Distinguished representatives,

The international community also needs credible ways to distinguish natural outbreaks, accidents and deliberate biological events. The UN Secretary-General's Mechanism remains the principal international mechanism for investigating alleged biological weapons use, yet it has never been activated in a biological context. Biological incidents present particular challenges of detection, attribution and access. Strengthening preparedness to investigate them should therefore remain a priority.

The BWC does not need a new prohibition. Its prohibition remains comprehensive. What it needs is the institutional capacity to make that prohibition credible in a rapidly changing biological landscape.

The remaining Working Group session provides an opportunity to take an important step in that direction. States parties should seize it.

We thank you for your attention.